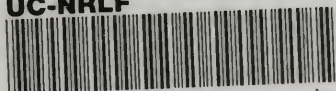


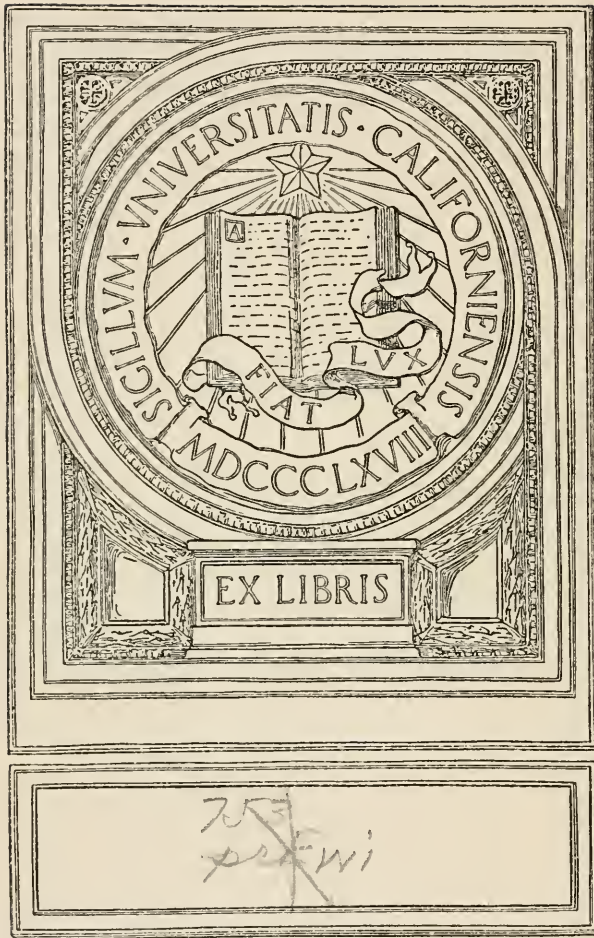
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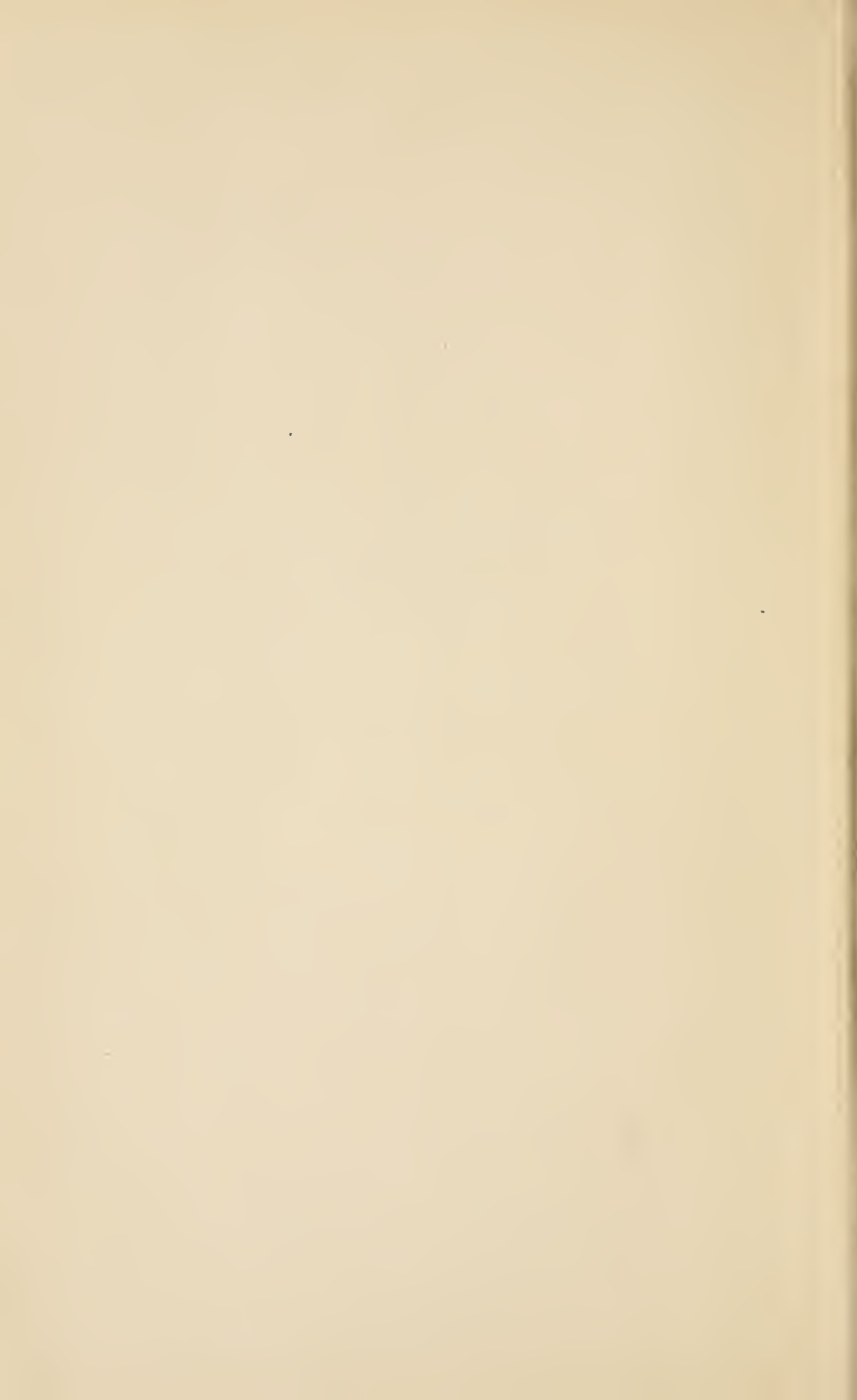


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THE
PROMETHEUS BOUND
OF ÆSCHYLUS



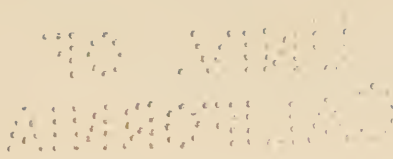
THE
PROMETHEUS BOUND
OF AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED BY
MARION CLYDE WIER

INSTRUCTOR IN RHETORIC, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



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1916



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MAIN

TO LYDIA DORSEY WIER

A little souvenir of summer days
When all secure from summer's ardent rays
 We mused upon the shrill cicala's lyre
Thrilling the drowsy woodland with its lays;

Or turning gazed across the pulsing bay
Wherever Phœbus shook the fires of day,
 And marked the merry sails go on a gleam
Down to the world that far beyond us lay.

A little souvenir of summer days,
A gleam late stolen from the ancient blaze;—
 If for an hour it light some dim heart-fane,
Thou art the inspiration, thine the praise.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROMETHEUS BOUND

PROLOGUE

- 1- 88 First scene. Kratos and Bia enter with Prometheus; Hephæstus follows with his tools.
- 89- 126 Second scene. Prometheus alone; invocation of nature. The ancients thought that such an invocation provoked pity. It has become a literary commonplace.

PARODOS

- 128- 191 Prometheus and chorus. Kommos. Chorus enters in winged chariot. Motive stated in first strophe.

FIRST EPISODE

192- 395

- 192- 284 First scene. Prometheus and Coryphæus. Prometheus longs for sympathy. Chorus sympathetic and curious. The

STRUCTURE

exposition of the situation is complete at 284.

285- 395 Second scene of the first episode. Oceanus, the father of the Oceanides, enters on winged steed. Beginning of the action that leads to the catastrophe.

FIRST STASIMON

396- 435 "Tears from the depths of some divine despair."

SECOND EPISODE

436- 527 Prometheus recounts to Coryphæus his kindness to gods and men and waxes bitter at his plight.

SECOND STASIMON

528- 566 Peace with heaven; peace and calm on earth.

THIRD EPISODE

567- 908 Io and Prometheus.

THIRD STASIMON

909- 938 Calm after storm.

EXODUS

939-1072

STRUCTURE

- 939- 975 First scene. Prometheus and Coryphæus; preparation of the catastrophe.
- 975-1072 Second scene. Prometheus and Hermes. Development of the catastrophe.

CATASTROPHE

- 1073-1124 Prometheus and Hermes; Coryphæus sings mesode.

CHARACTERS

KRATOS AND BIA

HEPHÆSTUS

PROMETHEUS

CHORUS OF OCEAN NYMPHS

OCEANUS

IO, THE DAUGHTER OF INACHUS

HERMES

INTRODUCTION

I am told that there is not much to be said for translations, particularly for Greek translations. To scholars they are considered superfluous, while to the rest of us, if not misleading, certainly a source of frequent misunderstanding. At times I have been almost convinced that we should try to get along without them. But in these days when Greek is practically relegated to the curriculum of antiquity it would seem that a good translation might prolong to some degree the memory of a language that has contributed to the world so generously of its beauty of thought and form.

I have a friend, however, who maintains on the other hand that for the consummation of the desuetude of a language there is no agent more potent than the translation. He insists that when we consider the English Bible and perceive how useless that great translation has made the original, we have reason for rejoicing in the thought that Greek is still moribund only; that it has not gone down to death for the very reason that in its own case no such translations exist;

INTRODUCTION

that should they be forthcoming they would give at once to all literary study of Greek originals the *coup de grâce*. I have comfort in the thought that there is no imminent danger of such a death; “ὁ λωφῆσων γὰρ οὐ πέφυκέ πω.”

As for this translation, I was impelled to make it by curiosity; I wanted to find out what I could make Æschylus sound like in English. I chose the “Prometheus” to translate because to me it was the most interesting of his shorter plays. In my version I have kept as close as I could to the original, endeavoring to preserve all the author’s ideas in their true literary setting. And I have made special effort to avoid the careless “washing away” of the metaphors and other figures of speech. I have also striven to avoid introducing figures and ideas foreign to the text. To the matter of emphasis I have given some care, following as closely as possible in my lines the important word order of the original, particularly where this seemed to depart from the normal order.

In the dialogue I have employed the usual English blank verse. For the choruses I had hoped to develop a form that would closely approximate the rhythms of the original; but after considerable experimenting I gave up the design; I still feel, however, that most of

INTRODUCTION

the complicated Greek meters and rhythms could be reproduced in English if a man of leisure and learning should undertake the task with sufficient diligence and enthusiasm. I have used instead the conventional English stanza forms that seemed to me best to reproduce and maintain the mood of the original. The anapests I have endeavored to reproduce throughout, adding rimes "as necessary makeweights for the imperfections of an otherwise inadequate language."

The debt of many English writers to Æschylus is well known. What Shelley thought of him and owed him is set forth to some extent in the introduction and text of his "Prometheus Unbound." Browning used him so subtly that even to-day we scarcely realize the extent of his debt. But of modern writers it was Swinburne who borrowed his beliefs, ideas, and expressions with most consummate daring. No Æschylean thought of importance has escaped a gorgeous setting in some one or other of his poems. Reference to his adaptations from the "Prometheus" will be found in the notes.

I feel indebted to the editions of Weclein, Weil, and Case, and am very grateful to Professors John G. Winter, Fred N. Scott, and Carl E. Eggert for valuable criticism and suggestions.

THE PROMETHEUS BOUND OF
ÆSCHYLUS



THE PROMETHEUS BOUND OF ÆSCHYLUS

PROLOGUE

[*Enter CRATOS and BIA, dragging the figure of PROMETHEUS. HEPHÆSTUS with his tools accompanies them.*]

CRATOS

Now we are come to the utmost land of earth,
The Scythian trail, a desert void of men.
Hephæstus, thine the need to obey commands
The Father cast upon thee, firm to fix ¹
On high-based crag this fool that stops at naught,
In riveless bonds of adamantine chains.
For thine own flower, the burning gleam of fire ²
Whose bud outblossoms into every art,
This has he stolen and then bestowed on man.

Such sin must he to the gods now expiate
To learn to bear content the rule of Zeus³
And turn him from his mankind-loving bent.

HEPHÆSTUS

Cratos and Bia, for you two the behest
Of Zeus is final; naught stands in the way.
But I have not the heart a kindred god
Perforce to bind in storm-besieged ravine.
But I must get me daring for the deed;
Light honor of God's word weighs down the heart.

High-hearted son of Themis who counsels fair,
Thy pain is mine that I with bonds secure
Shall nail thee unto this rock remote from men
Where thou shalt hear no voice nor see the form
Of any mortal; stung by the sunbeam's glow
Thy skin shall lose its bloom; thou shalt be glad
When night bedecked in stars obscures the day
Or Helios dissipates the frost of morn;
Forever will the weight of woe at hand
Wear on thee, for thy savior is yet unborn.

Such profit for thy mankind-loving bent.
A god, nor cowering at the rage of gods,

Their gift to man thou gavest more than meet.
Wherefore now guard this rock of no delight,
Upstanding, sleepless, bending not the knee.
Many the cries and groans of no avail
That thou shalt utter! For the heart of Zeus
Is difficult to reconcile with prayer.
Yea, wholly ruthless he whose rule is young.

CRATOS

Well, wherefore lingering pity him in vain?
Why him to gods most hateful hatest not thou,
A god who stole from thee thy prize for man?

HEPHÆSTUS

Kinship is strong and strong, companionship.

CRATOS

Agreed; but heeding not the sire's command,—
Is not the dread of this more potent still?

HEPHÆSTUS

Pitiless ever thou and fierce of heart.

CRATOS

A cure for him comes not on thy lament;
In bootless travail labor not in vain.

HEPHÆSTUS

O curses many on this my handicraft.

CRATOS

Why curse thy craft? Of all these present woes,
Plainly to speak, thy craft is no wise cause.

HEPHÆSTUS

Would it had graced at least another's lot.

CRATOS

All things are hard except for gods to rule.

HEPHÆSTUS

In this I know it well, and have no answer.

CRATOS

Well, why not haste to cast his bonds about him
Or ever the sire behold thee tarrying?

HEPHÆSTUS

Right here the bonds for any one to see.

CRATOS

Cast them about his arms, then mightily
Smite with thy hammer; nail him to the rocks.

HEPHÆSTUS

It nears its close nor lags, this task of mine.

CRATOS

Strike harder, faster bind, leave nothing loose;
He's clever to find from hopeless straits a way.

HEPHÆSTUS

This arm at least is fixed and will not move.

CRATOS

Now pin the other fast that he may learn,
Wise though he be, he's witless matched with Zeus.

HEPHÆSTUS

Save him, no one will justly censure me.

CRATOS

The heartless fang of adamantine spike
Mightily drive thou straightway through his breast.

HEPHÆSTUS

Ah me, Prometheus, I bewail thy woes.

CRATOS

Dost shrink again, bemoan the foes of Zeus?
See that one day thou pitiest not thyself.

HEPHÆSTUS

Thou seest a sight to eyes that see unsightly.

CRATOS

I see but one obtaining his own due.
Strap now about his ribs the binding bonds.

HEPHÆSTUS

Necessity compels; spare sharp commands.

CRATOS

Nay but I will command;—howl on to boot;
Go down and ring by force his legs around.

HEPHÆSTUS

Well, this is done, and that right speedily.

CRATOS

Strike strongly now the fetters sharp and keen;
For stern indeed is our new taskmaster.

HEPHÆSTUS

Thy tongue doth utter words that match thy mold.

CRATOS

Be thou soft-hearted; for my temper firm
And stubbornness of spirit, no reproach.

HEPHÆSTUS

The bonds are on his limbs; come, let us go.

CRATOS

Now wanton where thou art and from the gods
Strip honors for the creatures of a day.⁴
What of thy pain can mortal man abate?
False naming thee the gods Prometheus called⁵
Who hast indeed of forethought grievous need
To win thee exit from this keen device.

PROMETHEUS

[*Alone.*]

O divine Ether and swift wingèd winds⁶
And river fountains, Ocean's countless smiles,
And earth, the mother of all things, and thou orb
Of him, the all-beholding sun, I call;
See what, a god, I suffer at the hands of gods.
Behold with what wickedness ground into dust
Through the oncoming centuries wrestle I must
Down the myriad years;
Such, such is the bond the new ruler would claim
To have fashioned against me, the bondage of shame.
And the stream of my tears
Must flow for the present and what is to come,
As I seek where the fates of my woes hid the sum.

And yet what am I? surely I foreknow
All that the future holds, nor shall one ill
Come on me unforeseen; my destined lot
As lightly must I suffer as I may,
Knowing necessity is not withstood.
Yet neither can I silent be nor speak
Of this my fortune; for because I gave
To man a boon I bear this yoke of need.
For I am he who sought the stolen fount
Of fire stored in a fennel stalk, which proved
Teacher of arts to men, a great resource.
And this the penalty that I must pay
For my transgression, chained beneath the sky.

Ah, ah!

What sound, what scent is winged to me unseen?
God-spied or mortal or mingled both in one?
Has witness come to this far rock remote
To view my toils or wills he what instead?
Ye see me bound, a wretched god ill-starred,⁷
The hated of Zeus, yes, the hated of all
The deities, many as range in his hall,
Through my over-much fondness for mortals.
Ah me, ah me, what rustling, say,
Do I hear hard by as of birds of prey?

Air whirs with the beat quick-stirring of wings
 And fearful is everything round me that springs.

[*Parodos, divided between CHORUS and actor (COM-
 MATIC). CHORUS enter in a winged car.*] ⁸

CHORUS

O fear thee naught, this is a friendly choir
 That on our wind-swift oarage lightly vying
 Comes, winning scarce the sanction of our sire;
 The breezes keen to carry sent us flying,
 The echo from the din of smiting ire
 Pierced through the cavern hall where we were lying
 And struck from me my grave-eyed shame afar,
 And I sped barefoot in my wingèd car.

PROMETHEUS

O offspring of Tethys whose children are many,
 His daughters who rolls round the whole of the
 world
 In a stream that the magic of sleep has not furled,—⁹
 O daughters of Ocean your father, behold,—
 Regard the close bonds wherein compassed I lie
 On a rock jutting up from its gorge to the sky
 Where I watch for what no one would envy mine
 eye.

CHORUS

I see, Prometheus, and a fearful cloud
Tear-colored, gushes up before mine eyes
When I behold thy form, how, shackle-bowed
High up in adamantine bonds it lies.¹⁰
Under the pall of dim Oblivion's shroud
Zeus hides the wreck of older dynasties;
New rulers lord it up Olympus' way,
And lawless statutes, newly furbished, sway.

PROMETHEUS

If under earth only or down into hell¹¹
Where the corpses are garnered he'd cast me to dwell
Gripped round by the rings of my harsh clinging chains,
Where no man nor god might exult in my pains!¹²
But now am I sport of the wind as it blows,
While my sorrows increase in the joy of my foes.

CHORUS

Who of the gods can be so hard of heart
That he would gladden at thy foul abuse?
Who does not feel his soul indignant start
At thy affliction, saving only Zeus?
Bitter and stern, he holds his mind apart,

Ouranos' children trampling with no truce;
Nor till he 's sated will he ever cease
Unless one seize his realm and win release.

PROMETHEUS

But verily me, though I 'm bound in the chain
And rankled in limbs by the iron's keen pain,
Shall the potentate new of the gods sorely need
To show the new counsel whereby he must bleed
And be reft of his scepter and honor's fair meed.
Then me not at all with his honey-tongued ways ¹³
That gloze the grieved soul with harmonious phrase
Shall he ever win o'er that I 'll come to forget
Or cower in terror or cringe at his threat
And reveal him this secret, before he sets free
My limbs from the shackles that eat into me
And then to atone for my anguish agree.

CHORUS

Thou art right bold and in thy bitter throes
Thou yieldest nothing; far too free of tongue;
My heart is pierced with terror at thy foes,
For into such a gale thy bark is flung
I wonder who the appointed season knows

When thou mayest beach thy ship with sails loose-
hung.

The son of Kronos' mind and heart are such
As humble word or prayer may never touch.

PROMETHEUS

I know it is hard, that he setteth apart
The workings of justice to please his own heart;
But he none the less in his day shall wax mild,
When his peace shall be broken, his rest be defiled;
Then willing with me will he stand reconciled;
His deeply pent rage shall be blasted and waste,
And in friendship's close bonds shall we, both of us
haste.

FIRST EPISODE

[PROMETHEUS *and* CORYPHÆUS.]

CHORUS

Uncover now and tell us all thy tale;
On thee accused of what does Zeus lay hold,
Thus using thee with bitterness and shame?
Tell us, if from the telling comes no harm.

PROMETHEUS

Painful to me even to speak of this,
But silence too is pain; both ways unwelcome.

When first the gods made prelude of their rage
And strife within their midst was moved to stand,
Some fain to cast out Kronos from his throne
That Zeus might thenceforth reign; and others then
Intent that Zeus might never rule the gods;
Then I, devising counsel to persuade
For best the Titans, sons of Ouranos
And Chthon, failed utterly; the subtle wiles

They set at naught within their stubborn hearts
And hoped unmoiled of war to rule by might.
But unto me not once but oft my mother
Themis and Gaia, one being of many names,¹⁴
Had mention made of destiny foredoomed ;
That not through force nor ruthless power of hand
But by their craft would the mightier win and rule.
This secret, when I tried to tell in full,
They saw not worthy of the least regard.
So circumstanced, it better seemed to me
To win the approval of my mother's mind
And willing take my stand by willing Zeus.
Through my designs the gloomy deep abyss
Of Tartarus the ancient Kronos hides
And them that fought beside him ; in this wise
The master of the gods by me advanced
My kindness with evil compensates.
Somehow inherent lurks in the heart of kings
A strange disease, to hold no faith in friends.
But let that go ; your question, what the charge
Whereon he works me ill, this will I answer.

As speedily as he had taken seat
Upon his father's throne to the gods straightway

Their own peculiar honors he assigned,
And then bethought his kingdom to arrange.
For man long wretched made he no provision,
But had in mind to sweep the race from sight
And then create another all anew.
'Gainst this none took a stand save me alone;
But I grew bold; I saved the race of man
From falling rent in ruin down to Hades.
Wherefore with these afflictions am I bowed,
Painful to suffer, piteous to see.
In my compassion mortals I upheld,
But I am not deemed worthy of compassion,
So ruthlessly in harmony I'm tuned,
A sight that looks to Zeus in condemnation.

CHORUS

Of iron heart and fashioned out of stone,¹⁵
Who has no share in these thy toils, Prometheus.
I should have chosen not to see thy plight,
But seeing it, I take to heart thy pain.

PROMETHEUS

Ah me, my friends, I'm piteous to behold.

CHORUS

In truth, didst thou no further go than this?

PROMETHEUS

I hid from men foreknowledge of their doom.¹⁶

CHORUS

Finding what drug to medicine the ill?

PROMETHEUS

Blind hope I planted deep within their hearts.¹⁷

CHORUS

Great blessing this, didst thou bestow on man.

PROMETHEUS

And more than this, I gave them also fire.

CHORUS

The things of a day now use the flame-bright fire?

PROMETHEUS

Wherefrom they too shall master many arts.

CHORUS

On such a charge as this is now doth Zeus —

PROMETHEUS

Abuse me, nor a respite give from pain.

CHORUS

Is there no end appointed for thy toil?

PROMETHEUS

None other save when seems it good to him.

CHORUS

How seem good? What the hope? Dost thou not see
That thou hast sinned? But how, no joy for me
To mention and my words would bring thee pain.
But let this go, seek thou release from toil.

PROMETHEUS

Easy it is for him who keeps his foot
Outside the path of woe to advise, to warn
Him faring ill; this knew I all too well.
Willing, willing I sinned, I'll not deny.
In helping men I got me naught but trouble.
But never I thought in retribution thus
To waste away upon these lofty crags,
My lot this bare inhospitable rock.
So do not grieve for this my present plight;
Dismount and hear the fate that is to come,
That ye may learn my sufferings entire.
Give heed, give heed and give your sympathy
To one who suffers; sorrow roaming wide
Impartial stops and stays awhile with me,
To tarry later seated close by thee.

CHORUS

To us, Prometheus, keen listeners all,
In the throes of thy sorrows thou raisedst thy call.
And now with light foot from our wind-driven car
And the ether serene and the bird-ways afar
To this rock-riddled desert we straightway draw near;
Thy sorrows and toils to the end we would hear.

[OCEANUS, *father of the Oceanides, enters, mounted upon a winged steed. The anapæsts of OCEANUS accompany the descent of the CHORUS from their chariot into the orchestra. This scene and the second episode form the second act, the beginning of the action which leads to the catastrophe.*]

OCEANUS

I have come to the term of this far-stretching road,
Prometheus, I've come to thee; long I bestrode
This feather-swift bird unguided of rein,
But bent by my will hath he measured the main.
With thee in thy fortunes know well that I grieve;
For such is the bond that our kinship would weave.
But apart from our kinship, there is no other friend

To whom greater share than to thee I 'd extend ;
More staunch than Oceanus hast thou no friend.

PROMETHEUS

Ah me, the marvel of it ; hast thou come
To visit me and look upon my toils ?
How didst thou dare to leave thy namesake stream,
Thy cave self-wrought, rock-vaulted, here to come
Unto this dreary land, the mother of iron ?
Verily hast thou come to see my plight
And raise indignant voice with me in ills ?
Behold a sight ; the very friend of Zeus,
Who helped establish him upon his throne,
How bowed with what requital at his hands.

OCEANUS

I see, Prometheus, and I have in mind
To urge thee for the best, for all thy wit.
Know thyself ; come, fashion anew thy ways ;
New is the tyrant now who rules the gods.¹⁸
But if thou wilt thus vent rough, whetted words,
Speedily, though he sits so very high,
Zeus, hearing thee, will make thy present horde
Of troubles seem the merest play of children.

Come, wretched man, the rage that thou hast nursed,
Cast from thee; Seek from these thy pains release.
Old-fashioned, perhaps, the word I speak to thee;
Yet such, Prometheus, comes to be the wage
Of him whose tongue upvaunteth overhigh.
But thou art not yet prostrate nor dost yield
To present ills, but seekest rather more.
But never, if thou take me for thy guide,
Wilt thou extend thy leg unto the goad,
Seeing that he who rules is a rough king
And monarch sole who gives account to none.
Now will I go and win thee from these bonds;
But thou be silent, not in speech perverse;
For knowest thou not, who art exceeding wise,
The penalty that plagues an idle tongue?¹⁹

PROMETHEUS

Happy I deem thee, being free from blame,
Though thou didst share and dare all things with me;
And now have done, nor give thee any care;
Never wilt thou persuade him; he is hard.
But peer about, lest pain beset thy path.

OCEANUS

Thy nature shows thee better far to counsel

Thy neighbor than thyself; I judge by deeds,
Not words; restrain me not upon my way.
My heart is certain that this boon on me
Zeus will bestow, to loose thee from thy toils.

PROMETHEUS

For this I thank thee and will never cease;
Of zeal thou hast omitted not a mite.
But labor not; in vain and gaining naught
For me thou 'lt toil, if toil be in thy heart.
But calm thyself and keep thee from the issue.
For I, though faring ill, would not for this
See trouble come to many; surely not.
Even my brother Atlas' sorry plight
Wears on my heart; he stands in the west remote,
Upon his mighty shoulders bearing up
The pillar of earth and heaven, no arm-delight.
And him, earth-born, that haunts Cilician caves,
I saw with eye of pity, a monster dire;
The raging Typhon of a hundred heads
By might laid low, who stood against all the gods,
From horrid jaws hissing his terror forth,
While from his eyes he flashed a piercing flame
As he perforce the realm of Zeus would storm.

But on him came the sleepless shaft of Zeus,
The downward-swooping thunder breathing fire,
That struck from him his tongue's highmounting boast ;
For smitten through his very soul he fell
To crumbling ashes, thunder-reft of might.
And now his corse, a bootless thing outstretched,
Lies still beside the narrows of the sea,
Pressed hard beneath the weight of Ætna's roots.
But seated upon the very topmost crags
Hephæstus with his hammer smites his ore,
Whence from the molten mass will break one day
Rivers of fire to glean with savage jaws ²⁰
The fair Sicilian fruitlands on the plains.
Such is the wrath Typhon shall send upseething
With shafts of hot insatiate surge of fire,
Though with his thunder Zeus hath made him dust.
But thou, not witless, hast no need of me
To teach thee ; save thee by thine own device ;
And I my present fortune still must bear
Until the heart of Zeus is slaked with rage.

OCEANUS

Surely, Prometheus, surely thou knowest this,
A temper distraught is often cured by words?

PROMETHEUS

Aye, if betimes one soften down his heart,
Nor check perforce the rage that swells within.

OCEANUS

For wise foreknowledge and for heart that dares
What penalty seest thou waiting? Tell me that.

PROMETHEUS

Overmuch trouble and senseless stultitude.²¹

OCEANUS

Let me be sick of this disease since most
It profits wisdom to appear the fool.

PROMETHEUS

This failing will appear to be mine own.

OCEANUS

Plainly back home thy speech would send me straight.

PROMETHEUS

Yes; win disfavor not by pity for me.

OCEANUS

With him who now sits on the almighty throne?

PROMETHEUS

Of him beware lest he be vexed in heart.

OCEANUS

Prometheus, thy misfortune teaches me.

PROMETHEUS

Away, begone; cleave to thy present mind.

OCEANUS

Me starting on my way thou urgest loud;
The smooth wind-plain my swift four-footed bird
Chafes with his wings and doubtless will be glad
In his own stall at home to bend his knee.

FIRST STASIMON

CHORUS

I mourn thine ills, thy lot that kills, Prometheus;
The falling drops of tears that rise
Over the fountains of mine eyes
Distil a tender stream that goes
To wet the cheek wheredown it flows.
For thus unenviably Zeus
Rules with the laws he made whose use
Shows to the gods of ancient days
The insolence his reign displays.

From every side the country wide
Has shrieked aloud;
Raising indignant voice it cried
That the ancient honor once its pride,
Magnificent and mighty, thine
And thine own kins', has fallen supine.
And mortals, they that stablished dwell

In homes of sacred Asia, tell
Their tale of long lament; thy fate
Has touched them all compassionate;

And they that dwell in Colchis' land,
Bold virgins who in battle stand
All undismayed, and Scythian host
That dwells on Earth's most distant strand
Afar along Maiotis' coast;

Arabia's Ares-grafted flower
Whose citadel stands like a tower
Rock-built, with Caucasus hard by;
Whose hosts the sharp-beaked spearshafts shower
Amid the moil and shriek and cry;

One other Titan god alone
I saw beset in days of old;
Subdued, in cruel bondage thrown,—
Atlas, exceeding strong to hold
Upon his back the vaulted sky
Whereunder pleads his laboring cry.
And roars the surge accordant woe
Harmonious to the deep's lament;

Dark Hades mutters far below,
Over thy piteous plight intent;
While all the springs of rivers pure
Bewail the pain thou dost endure.

PROMETHEUS

Think not my silence stubborn-souled or proud;
With anxious care I eat my heart away,
Seeing myself so smothered in my shame.

And yet their honors to these same young gods,
What other than myself dispensed them all,
From first to last? Of this I hold my peace;
I should but speak to you who clearly know.
But hear men's woes,—how when they were mere
children

I made them thoughtful, filled their minds with wit.
I do not speak to cast reproach on man,
Merely to show goodwill in what I gave.
At first they seeing, only saw in vain;
And hearing, heard not; like to forms of dreams
Through a long life confounding everything.
Nor knew they brick-built homes that front the sun
Nor any craft of carpentry; but dwelt

Beneath the ground like emmets swarming thick
In caves that see no sunshine; not a sign
Was theirs of winter nor of blooming spring
Nor fruitful summer that was fixed and firm.
Intelligence was none in what they wrought
Till unto them I showed the rising stars
And wanings, to discernment ever dark.
Nay even numbers, chief among cunning arts
I found them, marshalings of graven signs,
And memory of all things, skilled muse-mother.
And first was I who brought the beasts to yoke,²²
Slaves to the yoke straps and the harnessed pack,
That they might bear for men their greatest burdens.
And unto the chariot I brought horses fond
Of pulling at the reins, proud wealth's delight.
And I, none other, fashioned sea-borne ships,
The sailors' ocean chariots hempen-winged.²³

These are the arts that I, alas, devised
For man, but for myself can find no wile
Whereby to win release from present pain.

CHORUS

Thou sufferest shame; thyself distraught in mind,

Thou wanderest and like a wretched leech
Fallen on sickness, thou hast lost thy heart
And nothing canst thou find to make thee whole.

PROMETHEUS

Hearing me through still further wilt thou marvel
At all the arts and means that I devised,
And this the greatest; if a man fell ill
There was no help in food nor drink nor ointment;
But in their need of remedies they pined
Until I showed them mixings of mild simples
Wherewith they grew immune from all disease.
And many forms of prophecy I ordered,²⁴
And separated first from dreams of night
Those destined to become a living truth;
And omens from sounds, of understanding hard,
I fitted to their knowledge; signs foretold
By meetings on the way, and lonely flights²⁵
Of solitary birds of crookèd claws,—
These I determined, which the luckier kind,
Which boded ill, the way of life in each,
The enmities, the loves, associations;
The smoothness of the entrails and what color
They must possess when pleasing most the gods,

The gall and liver's streaked shapeliness,
The limbs enwrapt in fat and the long chine
I burned, and thus I blazed the way for man
Into an art whose signs art hard to read;
I opened their eyes to signs that lurk in flame,
Erstwhile too dim for aught significant.
So much for this; but down beneath the earth
Resources hidden from the race of men,
Bronze, iron, silver, gold,— who can declare
That he before me hath discovered these?
No one, I know, unless he boasts in vain.
In one short statement learn the matter entire,
Man's every art hath from Prometheus sprung.

CHORUS

Nay, mortals help not thou unseasonably
And heedless of thine own self evil-starred.
For I am of good hope to see thee freed
From bondage and in strength no less than Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

Not thus hath Fate who bringeth all to pass
Decreed that this be done; but bent and bowed
By sufferings and tortures without end

Am I to find escape from these my bonds.
Craft is far weaker than necessity.

CHORUS

Who plies the rudder of necessity?

PROMETHEUS

Fates threefold and the mindful Erinyes.

CHORUS

And Zeus, is he less mighty than are these?

PROMETHEUS

Not even he shall refuge find from doom.

CHORUS

What doom for Zeus, except to reign forever?

PROMETHEUS

This mayest thou learn not; urge me not with prayer.

CHORUS

Surely a thing exalted dost thou veil.

PROMETHEUS

Another tale bethink thee of, for this

The season guards with silence ; nay, it must
Be covered away with care ; for keeping this
I shall escape my shackles and my pain.

SECOND STASIMON

CHORUS

Zeus, that orders all aright,
Never let him on my heart
Set antagonistic might ;
Let me not be slow to start
On my way the gods to praise
Offering on the quenchless plain
Hard beside old Ocean's ways
Sacred dues of oxen slain ;
May I not in word offend ;
May this thought through life extend,
Fading not while ages end.

Sweet it is with hopes loud vaunted
Through a life that reaches long
To pursue our way undaunted
Cheering heart with gladsome song !
But I tremble at the sight
Of thee in labors worn and wan ;

Zeus in reverence holding light
Too much thou dost honor man,
Even now pursuing still,
Prometheus, thine own stubborn will.

Thy grace, how graceless see, O friend, I pray ;
Whence comes the help that makes thy pain the less ?
What ward is thine from creatures of a day ?
Hast thou not seen the impotent shiftlessness
Dreamlike and stirring little, wherein they
Are bound, poor blinded race in dire distress ?
In no wise shall the plans that mortals lay
The harmony of mighty Zeus gainsay.

This learned I when I first beheld the sight,
Prometheus, of thy fatal, deadly plight.
How different utterly this tune to me
That just upon my ear came lightly winging,
And the sweet bridal song I raised for thee
About thy bath and bed, in honor singing
Of wedded joys, when fair Hesione
Thou camest homeward to thy chamber bringing,
Our father's child, winning with gifts to wed,
To be thy bride and share thy marriage bed.

THIRD EPISODE

[*Io and PROMETHEUS.*]

Io

What land, what race, whom say that I see
Fast bitted and bridled in rock — who is he
Gripped hard by the blast,—
In atonement for what art thou perishing fast?
And where upon earth, O tell me, I pray,
Have I, hapless of maidens, wandered away,
O! O!

Again the gadfly stings awake my woe;
The Argos-shade, to whom thy pangs gave birth,—
Keep him away, O Earth!
The herdsman of a thousand eyes I see,
Onward he comes, alas, shrewd glance on me
Whom, even dead, Earth cannot all conceal,
But back from out the shades his footsteps steal
While like a dog he hounds me through the lands
And drives me hungry down the sea-beat sands.

And consonant the wax-bound reed is droning,
A slumber-spell upon my eyes intoning;
Ah me, the toil! O whither will ye lead,
Ye wanderings that naught of distance heed?
What have I done, O Kronos-sprung,—
Finding me sinning in what hast thou flung
On my neck as a burden the yoke of despair?
Me frantic with fright
That the stings incite
Me away utterly must thou wear?
Burn me with fire, cover with earth or dash
Me down to sea-born things to nibble and gnash,
And grudge, O grudge not me,
O king, my prayers to thee;
Enough my wanderings that no distance heed
Have worn me; I can find no ways that lead
From my afflictions hard upon me laid;
Hearest the voice of her, the hornèd maid?

PROMETHEUS

Surely I hear the gadfly-driven maid,
Daughter of Inachus, who inflamed the heart
Of Zeus with love and, hated now of Hera,
Is tried perforce with all too lengthy running.

Io

Whence name of father mine thou utterest,
And who art thou, tell me, a maid unblest ;
Who art thou, being forlorn, that namest aright
Me roaming wretched in an evil plight,
And namest too the godsent ill
That wears me down, goading me still
With stings that strike me frantic ; woe !
In hunger-pangs of leaps I furious go,
Through others' wild resentment thus brought low ;
And who of all the ill-starred race is so
Wretched as I ?
But quickly state
The woes that await
Me still to suffer ; what drug to try,
What healing remedy, prithee tell,
If aught of this thou knowest well ;
Speak it aloud till it 's clear displayed
To the evil-voyaging hapless maid.

PROMETHEUS

I will speak clearly all that thou wouldst learn,
Weaving no riddles, but in language plain
Even as is just to open lips to friends.
Thou seest Prometheus, giver of fire to man.

Io

A boon for man in common showing thyself,
Wretched Prometheus, why dost thou suffer thus?

PROMETHEUS

I've just made end of weeping on my woes.

Io

Wilt thou not grant me this, the boon I ask?

PROMETHEUS

Say what thou askest; all shalt thou learn from me.

Io

Say who has nailed thee up within the gorge?

PROMETHEUS

The will of Zeus, Hephæstus' handicraft.

Io

Atonement makest thou for what offense?

PROMETHEUS

Making this clear alone, I've told enough.

Io

Added to this, show me my journey's end,
And what the time for me to wander still.

PROMETHEUS

To know not this is better than to learn.

IO

Hide not thou from me what I must endure.

PROMETHEUS

I grudge thee not a giving such as this.

IO

Then why delay to speak me now the whole?

PROMETHEUS

No ill intent; I dread to roil thy wits.

IO

Spare me not more than I would have thee spare.

PROMETHEUS

Since thou art eager I must speak; now hear.

CHORUS

Not yet; this pleasure also grant to me;
Come, let us first inquire of her disease,
She telling all her death-abounding doom;
Her future fate then let us hear from thee.

PROMETHEUS

Io, it is thy task to favor these
For other reasons, and because they are
The sisters of thy father; since to moan
And make lament where one may win a tear
From those who listen is to waste time well.

Io

I know not how your will to disobey;
In language clear the sum of your desire
Ye shall obtain; yet pains me even the telling
My god-sent storm of ills, the blight of my form,
Whence sped, how cleaving unto me evil starred.
Ever would nightly visions haunting oft
My maiden chamber greet and speak me fair
In pleasant language; "Maiden, greatly blest,
Why rest a maid so long, since thou canst make
A marriage most high? Zeus by the shaft of desire
Shot forth of thee is kindled, and he longs
The Cyprian rite with thee to share; O child,
Spurn not the bed of Zeus, but get thee gone
To the deep mead of Lerna unto the flocks
And ox-stalls of thy sire, that the eye of Zeus
May sate itself and rest from its desire."

By dreams like these that lasted nights entire
Was I oppressed unhappy till I dared
To tell my sire of the fear that roams by night.
And he to Pytho and Dodona-ward
Sped many messengers to learn whereby
He might in word or deed make glad the gods.
But they returned bringing back oracles
Of shifting words significant of naught,
Hard of interpretation once when spoken.
At last a straight word came to Inachus
To thrust me forth from home and fatherland
To range at will the utmost bounds of earth.
And if he would not, thunder fiery-eyed
Would come from Zeus to track my race to death.
By such decrees of Loxias convinced,
He drove me forth and locked me out from home
Unwilling he as I; but him compelled
The bit of Zeus perforce to do his will.
And straight my form and wits were all distraught;
Horned, as you see; stung by the sharp-lipped fly
With frantic bound I sought Kerchneia's stream
Fresh-flowing, and I rushed toward Lerna's spring,
The herdsman earthborn Argus with his wrath
Unmixed with pity following close behind

With endless eyes watching me step by step.
But him an unsuspected sudden doom
Stripped of his life, while I by the gadfly stung
With goad divine am scourged from land to land.
Thou hearest the past; if thou canst tell me what
My future woes are, signify, nor let
Thy pity warm my heart in falsehood's flame.
For words fictitious deem I doubly foul.

CHORUS

Woe, woe, alas, alas, forbear!

I never, never dreamed that words so strange
Could ever come to strike upon the ear;

Evil of sentience, past all feelings' range,
The suffering and sorrow and the fear

That chill my soul with goad whose edges change;
Alas for me, for me alas, O fate;
I shudder as I look on Io's state.

PROMETHEUS

Early you groan and seem as one afraid;
Forbear until you learn what still must come.

CHORUS

Speak; tell us all; to those who bear disease
'T is sweet to know the pain that still must come.

PROMETHEUS

Your first desire you won with labor light
On my part; for you first would hear from her
Recital of her wretchedness that 's past.
The rest hear now; what sufferings are decreed
For the poor maid at Hera's hands to bear.
Thou seed of Inachus, lay my words to heart,
To learn in full where terminates thy road.
First turn thee toward the rising of the sun
And travel onward o'er the unplowed lands
And thou shalt reach the wandering Scythians
Who, raised aloft on cars with well-wrought wheels,
Live out their lives beneath their wattled roofs,
All well equipped with bows that shoot afar.
Whom go not near, but following close the shore,
Sea-beaten by the surge, pass from the land.
And on thy left the iron-workers dwell,
The Chalybes, against whom be on thy guard;
Ungentle they, for guests' approach unmeet.
Thou 'lt reach Hybristes stream, not falsely named,
Which cross not over, for to cross is hard,
Until thou reach to Caucasus itself
Of mountains highest, where the river pours
In might from out between its very brows.

And crossing summits neighbors to the stars,
Must thou perforce the southern path pursue
Where thou shalt come to the hosts of Amazons
Man-haters, who shall one day make their home
Themiscyra, about Thermodon where
A rough sea frith lies, Salmydessia,
Poor hosts to sailors, a step-mother to ships.
And they shall start thee onward, gladly too,
And thou shalt come to the isthmus Cimmerian
Hard by the harbor gates that give straight pas-
sage,
Which thou shalt leave in hardihood of heart
To onward journey through Maiotic strait.
Great among men the tale shall ever be
Of this thy journeying; Bosphorus shall be called
After thy name; and leaving Europe's plain
Thou shalt arrive upon the Asian main.
Do ye not see the tyrant of the gods
In everything alike is violent?
For he, a god, in longing for this maid
On her a mortal cast these wanderings.
Bitter the suitor, maiden, hast thou got
For marriage rites with thee; the tale just heard
Consider not as yet within the prelude.

Io

Ah me, alas, ah me.

CHORUS

Alas, alas.

PROMETHEUS

Again thou criest aloud and moanest deep ;
When known the ills to come, what wilt thou do ?

CHORUS

Wilt speak of what remains for her of woe ?

PROMETHEUS

A baneful winter sea of woe unwearied.

Io

What gain is mine in living, why at once
Did I not fling me down this rugged rock,
That plainward falling this my sum of ills
I had escaped? 'T were better once for all
To die than suffer evil all one's days.

PROMETHEUS

With sorry grace wouldst thou my struggles bear
To whom no death at all is ever doomed.
For death had brought release from suffering,

But now is set no end for these my woes
Till Zeus down from the tyrant's seat shall fall.

IO

Will the time come when Zeus must fall from rule?

PROMETHEUS

Thou wouldst rejoice, I ween, in this event?

IO

Why not, who suffer ills because of Zeus?

PROMETHEUS

That this is so now is thy chance to learn.

IO

By whom shall he be plucked of tyrant's scepter?

PROMETHEUS

By his own empty-headed counselings.

IO

How? Tell me, if the telling is no harm.

PROMETHEUS

A marriage shall he make at last to rue.

IO

Divine or mortal? Speak, if it may be told.

PROMETHEUS

What matter who? The thing must not be told.

IO

'T is through his wife that he is to fall from power?

PROMETHEUS

A son she'll bear superior to his sire.

IO

For him is no escape from this decree?

PROMETHEUS

Verily none, save I from bonds be freed.

IO

Who is to loose thee against the will of Zeus?

PROMETHEUS

Of thine own offspring he must needs be one.

IO

What sayest? Shall child of mine unbind thy chains?

PROMETHEUS

Third in descent and ten more generations.

IO

No longer clear to see, this oracle.

PROMETHEUS

And seek not thou to learn in full thy pains.

IO

Offer me not a boon and then withhold it.

PROMETHEUS

Of stories twain I grant thee one to choose.

IO

What are they? Say and grant me then my choice.

PROMETHEUS

I grant it; choose; I speak thy future woes
Or tell of him who comes to set me free.

CHORUS

Of these, deign thou to tell the one to her,
To me the other; grudge me not the tale.
Tell unto her the wandering still in store;
To me thy savior tell of; this I crave.

PROMETHEUS

Since ye are eager I will not refuse
To tell in full as much as ye desire.
Thee first, Io, thy far-flung trail I'll show,
Which grave on memory tablets of thy soul.

When thou hast crossed the stream, the mainland's
term,
Make for the blazing dawn where treads the sun,
Crossing the breaking seas until thou come
Unto Cisthene's plain Gorgonian
Where Phorcis' daughters dwell, three ancient maids
Swan-shaped and gifted with one common eye
And one sole tooth, whom neither the radiant sun
Doth ever behold, nor the moon that keeps the night.
And near at hand their winged sisters three,
The Gorgons, tressed with serpents, dire to men,
Whereon no mortal looks and breathes again.
Such is the thing I warn against; beware!
Another hear; a sight that wakens fear;
Beware the sharp-beaked voiceless hounds of Zeus,
The griffins, and one-eyed Arimaspians throng,
Horsemen that dwell about the stream that flows
With gold, the path of Pluton; draw not near.
Unto a land far distant shalt thou come
A dark race dwelling near the sun's own springs,
And there the river Æthiops flows along.
Follow his banks until at last thou reach
A cataract whence Byblin mountains down
Nile sends his sacred pleasant tasting stream.

This shall conduct thee to the delta land
Neilotis, where thy distant habitation,
Io, 't is doomed, for thee and thine to found.
If this be indistinct in aught, obscure,
Turn to it once again and clearly learn;
Leisure is mine, even more than I could wish.

CHORUS

To her if thou hast aught untold to tell
Or anything passed over in the telling,
Of this, her roaming watched by many a death,
Speak; or if thou hast spoken all, to us
Our favor grant; surely thou dost remember.

PROMETHEUS

Her journey to the end in full she's heard;
But still to show she has not heard in vain,
What she ere hither coming bore I'll tell,
Giving it as a witness of my words.
The story in its fullness I pass over,
Beginning at the close of her roamings hither.

Now when thou camest unto Molossian plains
And round Dodona of the lofty ridge,
Prophetic seat of Zeus Thesprotian,

And marvel past belief, the talking oaks,
By which in clear and no-wise riddling speech
Wast thou addressed as the glorious bride of Zeus
That was to be — art pleased at aught of this?
Thence driven by the gadfly thou didst speed
The seastrand way to the great gulf of Rhea
Whence thou in backward flight art tempest-tossed.
And through all time to come that nook of sea
Know clearly shall be called Ionian,
Thy path-memorial unto all mankind.
A token this to thee of mine own mind
That sees more clearly than the light reveals.
The rest to you and her alike I tell,
Reaching of former tales the selfsame track.
There is a city, Canobus, most remote
Of earth, beside the very mouth of Nile;
There Zeus at last will make thee sane of mind,
Stroke thee with hand that frights not, merely touching.
A namesake of the scions got of Zeus
Then shalt thou bear, the swarthy Epaphus,
And he shall reap the whole of all the land
That Neilus flowing wide pours waters on.
Thence fifth in generations from this source
Back unto Argos will reluctant come

A tribe of fifty children, women all,
Fleeing a hateful marriage with their kin.
But they, their cousins, passion in their hearts,
Hawks left of doves no distance far behind,
Shall come, a wedlock seeking best unsought.
For God shall grudge the favor of their brides.
Pelasia will receive them when their kin
'Are Ares-slaughtered under a woman-hand
Bold for the stroke through daring that wakes at night.
For every wife shall rob her lord of life,
Dipping a two-edged sword in slaughter's dye.
Thus on mine enemies may Cypris come!
But one desire shall overcome and blunt
Her will that she slay not her bedfellow.
And of two evils will she choose the one
That bears a coward's name, not stained with slaughter.
In Argos she will bear a royal race.
A lengthy tale to tell this to the end;
But seed from her shall flourish, bold of heart,
Famed for the bow, who from these toils of mine
Shall set me free. Such was the prophecy
Mine ancient mother, Themis the Titan, spoke.
But how and in what way needs much of time
To tell, and thou in learning naught wouldst gain.

Io

O away and away!
Me again doth, yea, the madness astray
In my soul burn hard while the gadfly's ire
Though forged without flame stings sharper than fire.
While my heart in its terror kicks hard at my breast
And my eyes whirl round like a wheel without rest,
And out of my running in frenzy I'm rolled
In a pitiless blast and my tongue's uncontrolled;
Confused are the words that beat without aim
On the surges of Até whose hate is like flame.

THIRD STASIMON

CHORUS A

Wise was he, verily wise,
Who pondered first in heart this thought,
Then with his tongue his neighbors taught
That for a man to seek his mate
In his own sphere and his estate
Is best in every guise.
Not those with riches puffed up high
Nor those whose race the heralds cry
Should any man who earns his bread
Be fain to woo nor yearn to wed.

CHORUS B

Never, O never may you,
O blessed Fates, me in the fold
O Zeus's couch reclined behold.
Never may I, a bride, draw nigh
His couch with any god to lie

Of all that roam the heavens through.
I shudder to behold the maid,
No lover of her lord, dismayed,
Crushed by the burden of her woes
That Here sends where'er she goes.

CHORUS C

For me a marriage mated near
My rank and station brings no fear;
But never from the greater gods
May love, who ne'er in slumber nods
Sight me with eye that none may flee.

Warless a war is this,
A pass wherethrough no passage is.
Ah then, what would become of me?
The will of Zeus I cannot see
How to escape and scathless be.

EXODUS

[PROMETHEUS *and* CORYPHÆUS. *Preparation for the Catastrophe.*]

PROMETHEUS

But mark, I say that Zeus, though bold of mind,
Shall prostrate lie, in that he now makes ready
To consummate a marriage that shall cast him
Down from the Tyrant's throne out into the dark,
And Kronos' curse will then be all fulfilled,
Which he invoked, fallen from his ancient rule.
From hardships such as these a refuge sure
Can no god clearly indicate save me.
This know I and the way; therefore content
Let him sit, brave of soul, in lofty bolts
Confident, speeding the fireshafts from his hands.
Nowise will this suffice to stay for him
A fall disgraced and all intolerable.
Such is the wrestler he with his own hand

Fits out against himself, a monster mighty;
Who then will find a flame to match the lightning
And far outleap the thunder's frightful roar;
And the sea-plague that makes the dry land quake,
Poseidon's trident spear he'll break in sunder
And stumbling on this evil he will learn
The difference 'twixt sway and servitude.

CHORUS

Thy heart's desire, this vauntest thou against Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

What happen will, I speak, and my wish besides.

CHORUS

Must we expect a master over Zeus?

PROMETHEUS

Pain will he suffer harder to bear than mine.

CHORUS

How art thou fearless, vaunting words like these?

PROMETHEUS

What shall I fear, for whom is due no death?

CHORUS

A task on thee more grievous he may lay.

PROMETHEUS

This let him do; all things have I foreseen.

CHORUS

Who reverence Adrasteia are the wise.

PROMETHEUS

Revere, call out, fawn ever upon the king;
 My care for Zeus is something less than naught.
 Let him do what he will; rule his brief day,
 But not for long will he command the gods.
 But lo, I see the messenger of Zeus,
 Lackey of him, the tyrant newly made;
 Doubtless he comes to bring a message new.

[PROMETHEUS *and* HERMES; *Development of the
 Catastrophe.*]

HERMES

To thee, the wise one, essence of bitterness,
 Sinner against the gods, on mortal man
 Heaper of honors, stealer of fire, I speak.
 The father bids thee declare the marriage bond
 Thou boastest of, wherethrough he falleth from might;
 And that too in no riddle-mannered guise,

But lay bare each detail ; no double journey,
Prometheus, bring upon me, for thou seest
That Zeus is by thy bearing nowise softened.

PROMETHEUS

Big-mouthed, forsooth, with insolence run over,
Thy speech, as fits a lackey of the gods.
New is the power you newly try, you dream
To dwell in griefless towers ; but from these
Two tyrants fallen have I not beheld ?
The third that lords it now, him shall I see
Most shamefully fallen and quickly ; do I seem
To fear and cringe before the new-made gods ?
Far am I, very far, from aught like that.
Stir up the dust back over the road thou camest ;
Naught wilt thou learn whereof thou questionest me.

HERMES

By stubborn ways of thine in other days
Didst thou define thine own demesne of pain.

PROMETHEUS

Thy livery for the ills wherein I fare,
Know clearly, I would never once exchange.

HERMES

Better, I ween, thy service to this rock
Than mine as faithful messenger of Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

To insult the insolent is only fair.

HERMES

Thou seemest to wax dainty in thy present ills.

PROMETHEUS

I? May I see my foes wax dainty thus,
And thee I number too within the list.

HERMES

Me dost thou blame in part for thy distress?

PROMETHEUS

In language plain I hate, yea, all the gods
Who faring well unjustly work me ill.

HERMES

I hear thee raging with no slight disease.

PROMETHEUS

Disease is mine if it be to hate my foes.

HERMES

Intolerable thou wouldst be if faring well.

PROMETHEUS

Ah me!

HERMES

This word at least Zeus hath no knowledge of.

PROMETHEUS

Time in the aging teaches everything.

HERMES

But thou hast not yet learned thy part of wisdom.

PROMETHEUS

Or thee a lackey I 'd not parley with.

HERMES

It seems thou 'lt answer naught the father asks.

PROMETHEUS

Owing him aught I 'd well repay the favor.

HERMES

Thou tauntest me as though I were a child.

PROMETHEUS

Thou art a child and witless somewhat more,

If thou dost hope from me a thing to learn.
There is no shame nor any device whereby
Zeus shall prevail to make me tell this thing
Before my shameful bonds are taken away.
Therefore let now be hurled the seething flame
With white-winged snow and thunder beneath the
ground;
Let him confound and scatter everything,
But naught of this shall bend me ever to tell
By whom 't is doomed that he be cast from power.

HERMES

See now if this to thee appear an aid.

PROMETHEUS

Long, long ago this thing was seen and planned.

HERMES

O deep in folly, dare but dare in time
In face of present ills to think aright.

PROMETHEUS

Thou urgest me vainly as one would urge a wave.
Never bethink thee that in heart dismayed
At the will of Zeus I shall grow woman-hearted
And cater to the god I deeply hate

With woman-aping outstretchings of hands
To loose me from these bonds; I'm far from that.

HERMES

I seem to speak in vain for all I say;
Thou 'rt melted not nor softened by my prayers;
But champing the bit even as a new-yoked steed,
Thou chafest hard and fightest against the reins.
But thou art fierce in impotent device,
For stubbornness to one that counsels ill
Hath in itself a power less than nothing.
But look, if my words heed thou not at all,
What storm and great third wave of ill is on thee ²⁶
From which is no escape; this rugged gorge
The father first with thunderbolts of flame
Will rend asunder and conceal thy form;
And thee an arm of rock shall lift on high.
And length of days when thou hast brought to close,
Back shalt thou come to light, and the wingèd hound
Of Zeus, the blood-stained eagle furiously
Shall tear and feed upon thy body's tatters,
Coming unbid, a banqueter all day
Upon thy black-gnawed liver feeding full.
Of hardships such as this expect no end

Till from the gods a savior shall appear
To bear thy woes, deigning to tread the dark
Home of the dead, the dusk Tartarean deep.
Therefore take counsel, for in nowise feigned,
This boast of mine, but very clearly spoken.
The mouth of Zeus knows not to speak a lie,
Its every word shall be fulfilled; do thou
Look carefully and heed and never deem
That stubbornness is better than good counsel.

CHORUS

To us not out of season Hermes seems
To speak; he bids thee set thy scorn aside
And seek wise counsel profitable; give heed!
'T is pity the wise should shoot beside the mark.

THE CATASTROPHE

PROMETHEUS

To me well aware of the message he brings
He hath cried him aloud ; but in suffering the stings
Of the hatred of foes I am little disgraced ;
So now at me here let the bolt be hurled,
Or the seething flame like a sharp tress curled ;
In the roar of the bolt by the winds embraced
Let Ether rage to the thunder shock
And the blast of the tempest the wide world rock
To the roots and caves of her very deep,
And the ocean surge in its wild rough sweep
Confound the stars on their sky-set ways.
And me let him seize and aloft upraise
And hurl into Tartarus black my form
Spun round on the eddies of Fate's dark storm
But me to the dead he cannot transform.²⁷

HERMES

Ah truly is this but to listen, to hark

To the counsels and words of a mind that is dark.
Is his prayer aught less than the prayer of one
Who is mad, are his ravings ever done?
But you at least who groan with his woe
Speedily out of this region go,
Lest your mind grow vain as a thing distraught
In the harsh hard roar from the thunder caught.²⁸

CHORUS

O speak once again in a different strain
To somewhat persuade me; intolerant, vain,
Is the word thou hast swept on the stream of thy
speech;
How darest thou me to play coward beseech?
With him would I suffer the pangs of his fate,
For lately I've learned every traitor to hate.
Disease there is none
I loathe with the loathing I feel for this one.

HERMES

Well, keep ye in mind what I now foretell;
And later when lashed by avengers from hell
Blame never your lot nor any time say
That Zeus without warning cast ill in your way.
Not so; but your own is the deed; you know;

Nor sudden the step nor secret the blow
Whereby through your folly you win Até's hate
Tight meshed in the measureless tangle of fate.²⁹

PROMETHEUS

And now comes the deed, no longer the word ;
And the world is upstirred
And the bellow of thunder below me is heard,
And the wreathings of lightning gleam bright as they
fly,
And whirlwinds roll the dust up to the sky.
And the blasts leap high of each wind that blows
In battle array like the bitterest of foes ;
While Ether with Ocean confusedly flows.
Such, such is the stroke that has fallen from Zeus
That my soul unto terror prepares to reduce.
O mother mine, O Ether divine,
Who sendest the light on all creatures to shine,
Thou seest the injustice, the shame that is mine.



NOTES

Note 1. "Father" seems to have been a generally accepted epithet of Zeus. We find him so styled by powers differing as far in degree as Cratos, Hermes, and Hephæstus.

Note 2. Cf. Swinburne, "Athens":

"Him who culled for man the fruitful bloom of fire."

Note 3. For the sentiment cf. Swinburne, "Atalanta," 148:

"Yet one doth well, being patient of the gods . . .

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague."

Note 4. A favorite Greek characterization of the helplessness of man. Cf. 546 f. and Aristophanes, "Birds," 685 f., thus translated by Swinburne:

"Come on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and like to the leaves' generations,

That are little of might, that are molded of mire, unending and shadowlike nations,

Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as visions of shadows fast fleeing —"

Note 5. Characteristic Greek pun. cf. Swinburne, "Erechtheus," 52-4:

"Eumolpus; nothing sweet in ears of thine

The music of his making; nor a song

Towards hope of ours auspicious."

Note 6. Swinburne, "Athens":

"Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and all swift winds on wing,

Wells of river heads, and countless laugh of waves past
reckoning,
Earth which brought forth all, and the orbéd sun that
looks on everything,—”

This invocation of the elements is very frequent in ancient literature and has become a modern commonplace. Swinburne again in his “Erechtheus,” 1647 ff. imitates the same passage:

“hear ye too

Earth and the glory of heaven and winds of the air,
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,
Late wroth, now full of quiet, hear, thou sun,
Rolled round with the rolling fire of the upper heaven
And all the stars returning; hills and streams,
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,
Night that shall hide not;”

Cf. Swinburne, “Eve of Revolution”:

“And thunder and laughter and lightning of the sovereign
sea.”

and “Atalanta,” 34:

“And fountain heads of all the watered world.”

“Atalanta,” 25:

“Let earth | Laugh, and the long sea —” The metaphor is frequently met in Greek literature. Cf.:

“Theognis,” 9: *ἐγέλασσε γαῖα πελώρη,
γήθησεν δε βαλὺς πόντος ἀλὸς πολιῆς.*

“Iliad,” 19, 362: *γέλασσε δὲ πᾶσα περὶ χθών.*

“H. Cer.,” 14: *γαῖα δὲ πᾶς ἐγέλασσε.*

Cf. Swinburne, “Erechtheus,” 1:

“Mother of life and death and all men’s ways,
Earth —”

Cf. Soph. Ph. 394; Eurip. Hipp. 597; Hom. Hymn XXX, 1
Æs, Cho. 127.

Note 7. The punishment of Prometheus is in the open;

this arouses his bitter resentment. Cf. 97; 177; 195; 227; 256; 438; 525.

Note 8. Swinburne, "Athens," thus refers to the entrance of this chorus:

"Glows a glory of mild-winged maidens upward mounting
Sheer through air made shrill with stroke on smooth swift
wings,

Round the rocks beyond foot's reach, past eyesight's count-
ing,

Up the cleft where iron wind of winter rings."

The Oceanides are the daughters of Oceanus and Tethys. Hesiod in the *Theogony* states that their number is three thousand.

Note 9. Cf. Swinburne "Atalanta":

"Lands undiscoverable in the unheard-of west
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea
Rolls without wind forever."

Note 10. Cf. Swinburne "Athens":

"Round a god fast clenched in iron jaws and fetters."

Note 11. In Sept. 860 the dead go "Into the all-receiving and unseen landing-place."

In the *Supplices* the chorus threatens to appeal to "The infernal Zeus of the dead, the most ready receiver of all who come to him."

Note 12. The wretched shrink from the exultation of their foes. In "*Iliad*," 3, 51, Hector chides his brother for bringing Helen to be "a sore mischief to thy father and city and all the realm, but to our foes a rejoicing, and to thyself a hanging of the head." In "*Iliad*," 6, 82, Æneas and Hector are urged to rally the Trojans "ere yet they fall fleeing in their women's arms, and be made a rejoicing to the foe." "*Iliad*," 10, 193, Nestor urges the guard to keep good watch "nor let sleep take any man, lest we become a

cause of rejoicing to them that hate us." *Æs. Per.* 1034, Xerxes speaks of his sorrows "the joy of our enemies."

Note 13. Cf. Swinburne, "Atalanta," 576 — "to weave sweet words and melt Mutable minds of wise men as with fire."

Note 14. Cf. Swinburne, "Athens":

"Earth whose name was also righteousness, a mother
Many named and single natured, gave him birth."

The identification of Gæa and Themis.

Note 15. Iron and stone designate lack of feeling and stubbornness. Cf. "Iliad," 16, 33, where Patroclus says to Achilles: "Peleus was not thy father, nor Thetis thy mother, but the gray sea bare thee, and the sheer cliffs, so rough is thy spirit."

Note 16. Cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 523 d; Horace, *Carm.* 3, 29, 29;
Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte premit deus,
Ridetque si mortalis ultra
Fas trepidat.

Swinburne reverses it. "Atalanta," 353:

"His (man's) speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes *foreknowledge of death.*"

Note 17. For the myth of Pandora cf. Hesiod, *O. D.* 94.

Note 18. Swinburne imitates the passage in dialogue between Althæa and Meleager, "Atalanta," 460 ff.:

AL. "What god applauds new things?"

MEL. Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

AL. But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

MEL. Yet is not less himself than his own law,

AL. Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

MEL. But what he will remolds and discreates." Etc.

Note 19. Silence is golden. Cf. Swinburne, "Atalanta," 1193 ff.

"But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech.
Loud words and longing are so little worth;
And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
For words divide and rend;
But silence is most noble to the end."

Note 20. Pindar, in the first Pythian ode describes very vividly the same eruption.

Note 21. *κουφόνουν*: Swinburne, A word from the Psalmist: "A *light-souled* rabble." "Atalanta," 201 "I speak not as one *light of wit*."

Note 22. Cf. Swinburne, "Erechtheus," 13:

"And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds
To lose the wild wont of their birth."

Note 23. Swinburne, "Athens": "And bade the wave steeds champ the rein."

Vergil, *Æn.* 1, 224: *Naves velivolae*

Ovid: *Velivolae rates.*

Swinburne, "Athens": "Gave their water-wandering chariot seats of ocean Wings."

Note 24. Prophecy was made possible by means of dreams, voices, omens, birds, sacrifice. Aristophanes, "Birds," 720: "And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that belong to discerning prediction:

Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon; you sneeze, and the sign's as a bird for conviction:

All tokens are 'birds' with you — sounds too and lackeys and donkeys. Then must it follow

That we ARE to you all as the manifest godhead that speaks in prophetic Apollo?"

Swinburne, Athens: "Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling letters

Taught the truth of dreams deceiving men's desire."

Note 25. Swinburne, "Athens":

"Showed the symbols of the wild bird's wheeling motion."

Note 26. Decima unda, decumanus fluctus; Sept. 760:

"And now as it were a sea of troubles is bringing on a billow, one falling, while another with triple crest it is raising, a wave that chafes and babbles at the city's stern."

Plato uses the same metaphor in Republic, V. "Perhaps you do not know that after I have barely surmounted the first two waves, you are now bringing down upon me the third breaker, which is the most mountainous and formidable of the three."

Swinburne treats the idea sentimentally. "Triumph of Time":

"It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life in the straits of time,
Who swims in sight of the great third wave
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb."

Note 27. Swinburne, "Athens": "He may smite me yet he shall not do to death."

Note 28. Swinburne, "A Ballad at Parting": "There in thunder-throated roar."

Note 29. The drag-net metaphor is rather common in Greek; Cf. Agamemnon 361; 1050; 1115.

Swinburne, "On the Cliffs":

“ Too close the entangling dragnet woven of crime,
The snare of ill new born of elder ill,
The curse of new time for an elder time,
Has caught and held her yet,
Enmeshed intolerably in the intolerant net,
Who thought with craft to mock the God most high,” etc.

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